

SB400
Favorable

Senator Smith
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 15, 2023

Dear Chair Smith,

My name is Michele Westfall, and I'm the chair of the Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MACDHH). MACDHH advises the Maryland Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing on matters and issues affecting the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind communities.

You and your committee will hear about all the benefits of open captioning from other testimonies. You may even hear negative feedback from movie theatres and movie theatre organizations claiming that open captioning has hurt their sales. While I understand this country is all about profits and capitalism, this is the wrong way to look at open captioning. Open captioning was never intended to be a for-profit venture. Open captioning is equivalent of sound. In other words, if sound was not included with movies, no one would go to the movies. It is the same with open captioning. Open captioning ensures that everyone is able to understand the movie. Additionally, movie sales depend on movie theatres offering optimum dates and times for movie showings, and this often doesn't extend to open captioned movies. Open captioned movies are often shown at inconvenient dates and times, and this sets up open captions for failure. Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and others with hearing loss have just as full lives as hearing people do, and we cannot always attend an open captioned movie on Tuesday night at 5 p.m. or Sunday morning at 9 a.m. As a Deaf citizen and the chair of MACDHH who loves movies, I fully support this bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michele Westfall
Chair, Maryland Advisory Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing
106 Garth Ter, Gaithersburg, MD 20879
240-575-2069
macdhhchair@yahoo.com